

876 m

( 1 )

---

*A DISCOURSE of the Advantage of the  
African Trade to this Nation, Extracted out  
of an Essay of Trade, Written by Mr. John  
Cary, Merchant.*

**T**HE *African Trade* is a Trade of the most Advantage to this Kingdom of any we drive, and as it were all Profit, the first Cost being little more than small Matters of our own Manufactures, for which we have in Return, *Gold, Teeth, Wax,* and *Negroes*, the last whereof are much better than the first, being indeed the best Traffick the Kingdom hath, as it doth occasionally give so vast an Employment to our People both by Sea and Land. These are the Hands whereby our Plantations are improved; and tis by their Labours such great Quantities of *Sugar, Tobacco, Cotten, Ginger* and *Indigo* are raised, which being bulky Commodities imploy great Numbers of our Ships for their Transporting hither, and the greater number of Ships employs the greater number of Handicraft Trades at home, spends more of our Product and Manufactures, and makes more Sailors, who are maintain'd by a separate Employ.

Now to advise a Government to Monopolize, and consequently to lessen this Trade, by confining it to a limited Stock, is the same as to advise the People of *Egypt* to raise high Banks to confine the River *Nilus* from overflowing, lest it should thereby Fertilize the Lands, or the King of *Spain* to shut up his Mines, lest he should fill his Kingdom too full of Silver. This Trade indeed is our Silver Mines; for by the Overplus of *Negroes* above what will serve our Plantations, we draw great Quantities thereof from the *Spaniard*; a Trade we are lately fallen into by a Compact of the two Nations for which a Factory or *Affiento* is settled by them at *Jamaica*, where what their Agent Buys is paid for in Pieces of Eight, besides oftentimes Thirty per Cent. *Cambio* for running the risque to the Continent, all discharged in the same Specie with great Punctuality.

Nor is this all the Advantage the Nation reaps thereby, it hath introduced another sort of Commerce, and given us Opportunities of Selling our Manufactures to that People, with whom we now grow into some sort of familiarity, and may be a means in time to make way for a larger Acquaintance, whereby we may reap the best part of the Treasure of those Mines; *Jamaica* being now become a Magazine of Trade to *New-Spain* and the *Terra Firma*, from whence we have yearly vast Quantities of Bullion imported to this Kingdom, both for the *Negroes* and Manufactures we send them; which as it was opened for the sake of their having the former, so when that Supply ceases, it will be removed to some other Place, and our industrious Neighbours are ready to receive it, who would perhaps take more care to

A

incourage

incourage it than we have done; for by the slow steps of the *African Company*, and the Hardships they have put on the Interlopers or private Traders, the number of *Negroes* Imported thither hath been so small, and so much below our Promises and the *Spaniards* Expectations, that this profitable *Assiento* or Factory hath for some time stood on Tiptoe, ready to waite itself to another Island; as it certainly had done long since, if the Interlopers had not given a better Supply than the Company.

We will now enquire what Reasons should perswade any Government to Monopolize or limit this Trade, and what have been the Consequences thereof?

As for the first; the necessity of having Forts, Castles and Soldiers to defend the Trade, which could not be carried on without great Charge and a Joint-Stock: These and such like Arguments attended with a Cloud of Guineas, had force enough to prevail upon an easie Prince, who tho of a Temper not inclined to Mischief, and had natural Parts capable to understand both his own and the Nation's Interest, yet being perswaded by those Harpies, who like so many Horse-leeches constantly hung upon him, and required more Treasure than his Income could afford; he was many times allured to do things which his own Judgment would not allow; so mischievous are evil Counsellors (especially of the Fair Sex) to a good-natur'd Prince.

But let us consider what these Forts, Castles and Soldiers now Settled by the Company are, their Use, and whether as good Securities for the Trade may not be made by a Regulated Company, out of a Stock to be raised on its Members, and those to be admitted for small Fines, and to pay a Duty on the Goods they Export, such as the *Court of Assistants* shall think fit to settle; which Stock to be employed for Buying or Building Forts where thought necessary, and defraying all Publick Charges for carrying on the Trade.

I do not remember that the greatest number of Soldiers, proved at the Committee Appointed by the Honourable *House of Commons* to enquire into that Affair, did exceed one Hundred and Twenty on the whole Coast; nor did their Forts and Castles appear to be any thing else save Settlements for their Factors, which (to secure their Goods from the Natives, and the sudden Insults of other Nations) they guarded both with Men and Guns; all which was Proposed to be done by a Regulated Company. Besides, when more Factories are Settled, consequently there will be more People, which will soon exceed their Number of Soldiers and be more formidable, whilst every Man fights for his own Interest; whereas those Soldiers (as it was there proved) were ill Provided for, worse Paid, and kept only by Constraint.

It was never made out (or indeed pretended) before that Honourable Committee, that those Forts and Castles were to wage a National War, or to secure against a National Invasion, the defence of their Guns could not exceed their reach, which was not above a Mile at most: nor were there any Magazines of Provisions laid up to expect a Siege from the Natives, neither could they hinder Interlopers who Traded on the Coasts of what Nation soever; but for that end the Company had obtained Frigats from the Government, who by illegal Commissions destroyed our own Merchant Ships (unless



less permitted on the Payment of Forty or Fifty *per Cent.* at home on the Goods they carried out) whilst they let others alone; this being seconded by their Factors in the several Plantations, who seized them and their Cargoes there if they escaped the former, discouraged our private Traders, who else found no Difficulties, the Natives receiving them as Friends, and choosing rather to deal with them than the Company; whose Factories also being at remote distances from each other, great part of that Coast was unguarded and untraded to by them.

Nor do I see what need there was to fight our way into a Trade altogether as advantageous to the Natives as to us, for whilst we supply'd them with things they wanted, and were of value amongst them, we took in exchange Slaves, which were else of little worth to the Proprietors; and it cannot be thought that the People of *England* who have settled such large Colonies on the Continent of *America* (besides its several Islands) where there was no reasonable Prospect of Encouragement, and have increased their Numbers so as to be able to defend their first Footing without the help of a Company, not only against the Natives where they found any, but likewise against all other Nations, should fall short in carrying on this Trade, which doth at the first view offer the Prospect of so great a Profit.

Let us now consider the Inconveniencies that have attended this Monopoly, and consequently the Conveniencies which would come to the Nation by digesting it into an open and free, tho' a regulated Company; sure if confining the working in a Golden Mine to one day in a week which would afford the like Treasure every day to the Nation cannot be its advantage, no more can the limiting this Trade; for if we send more Ships we fetch more *Negroes*, and vend more Commodities for their Purchase; besides every *Negro* in the Plantations gives a second Imploy to the Manufacturers of this Kingdom, and had we many more to spare the *Spaniards* would buy them, so there can be no Ground for putting this Trade into few Men's Hands, except 'tis designed those few shall grow Rich, whilst for their sakes the Nation suffers in its Trade and Navigation; The Company have made this detrimental advantage of their Charter, that they have thereby been enabled to buy up our Manufactures cheaper at home, and to make the *Planters* pay dearer Rates for *Negros* abroad, than could have been done if there had been more Buyers for the former, and Sellers of the latter; besides the ill supply they gave the Plantations, and the partiality in their Lots and Dividends there, the effect whereof was that one Planter who was befriended grew Rich by having good *Negros*, whilst another was ruined by having none but bad; and this drew with it another ill Consequence, their Factors as it were Monopolized Trade to themselves, by obliging the Planters to deal with them for other things if they expected favour when the *Negro* Ships arrived, so that the rest of the Merchants were forced to look on whilst the others had any thing to sell, and all because they were restrained by a Monopoly from supplying the Planter with the same Commodity, for which likewise the Company expected ready pay, whilst others gave long time.

This was fully proved before the Honourable Committee at one of their Meetings, to whom I heard an eminent Merchant of *London* of an undoubted Reputation and well acquainted with the Trade to *Africa* affirm, That on a former little relaxation of the severity of their Charter, which was then called



called in question by the Honourable *House of Commons*, some of our Woollen Manufactures fit for that Trade rose instantly *Fifty per Cent.* to his certain knowledg, occasioned by the Multitudes of Buyers, whereof he was one; and indeed it is not to be wondred at, for whilst that Company was in power many of the *English* Interlopers were forced to sit in *Holland*, where they also furnished their Cargoes, it being thought cause sufficient to stop a Ship here if any part of the Goods entered our gave Suspicion she was bound for the Coast of *Guinea*, which would have made a Stander-by to have thought that the *Dutch* had given Pensions in that Court as well as the *French*.

It is not to be doubted but that the Vending our Product and Manufactures and promoting our Navigation on advantageous terms is the true Interest of this Nation, and all Foreign Commerce as it advances either is more or less profitable: now the Confinement of the *African* Trade to a limited Stock promotes the ends of neither, and I beleive 'tis one reason why we know so little of that large Continent, because the Company finding ways enough to employ their Fund among those few Factories they had settled on the Sea Coast never endeavoured a farther *Inland* Discovery, whereas if it was laid open, the busie Merchant that Industrious Bee of the Nation would not leave one River or Creek untraded to, from whence he might hope to make Advantage.

It's to Trade and Commerce we are beholding for what knowledg we have of Foreign Parts, and it is observable that the more remote People dwell from the Sea the less they are acquainted with Affairs abroad; *Africa* is a large Country, and doubtless the Trade to it might be much enlarged to our Advantage, and better Settlements made and secured if good Methods were taken; Use and Experience make us at last Masters of every thing; and rhothe first Undertakers of a Design fall short of answering their private Ends, yet they may not the Ends of the Nation, by laying open a beaten Path for Posterity to tread in with Success where they miscarry'd; when all places in *England* may freely send Ships, and be permitted to the management of their own Affairs, this encourages Industry, and sets Peoples Heads at work how they may outdo each other by getting first into a new Place of Trade; besides the more Trades the more Buyers at Home and Sellers Abroad, and by this means our Plantations *Virginia and Maryland.* on that large Continent of *America* would be better furnished with *Negroes*, for want of which the Inhabitants there could never arrive to those Improvements they have done in the Islands, the Company having given them little or no Supply, who rather chose to send them to the latter, because they were able to make better Pay; But the Interlopers have done it, tho' under great discouragements from the Company and their Factors, who like the Dog in the Fable, would neither supply those Plantations themselves, nor suffer others to do it.

On the whole I take the *African* Trade both for its Exports and Imports, and also as it supplies our Plantations, and advances Navigation, to be very beneficial to this Kingdom, and would be made much more so, and better secured, were it laid open by being formed into a Regulated Company.